

Poems

APHIDS IN THE ROSE

Today, trying with a damp Q-tip
to swipe the aphids off the rosebush,
I wonder what concussion has occurred
inside my body, which cell it was
that woke up one morning with its RNA
gone nuts, a crazed terrorist
who tortures himself.
The doctor confirmed earlier reports
of inexplicable madness, my cervix
giving in to strange demands:
shoes on backwards, hands waving out of ears,
whole neighborhoods of nuclei
dancing maniacally.
I had seen pictures of cells
undergoing their dignified divisions—
rows of identical platoons
splitting their heads in half—
and then, for no apparent reason,
the sergeant shouts the right words
in the wrong order, his error
rippling through ranks, undeciphered.
Meanwhile, citizens are fleeing the cities
with wounds that can kill them,
something like napalm or radioactive tissue.
The whole womb-neck may as well
be a Bikini Island.
The doctor says my best hope is to
burn the thing down below ground level,
the deeper the better.
She's one of those who knows
the good effects of death.
I'm still poking at these flimsy aphids,
arguing against myself,
winning at each surrender.

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WHITE RABBIT II

Alice is not here today
But the Hatter just ran through
My ears seem long and furry
And my eyes are awfully pink
The hand which holds my pocket watch
Is looking very strange
I'm feeling most peculiar
But the waiting room is full
The usual conglomerate
But just a little odd
Mrs. Smith has faded out again
Leaving just a grin
The Whitlow twins are looking round
They're singing "Tweedle, Tweedle"
There's a hedgehog sitting on a chair
Reading last week's *People*
My office nurse is screaming
I think, "Off with his head"
The toadstool in the corner
Wasn't there when last I looked
My notes are all in Jaberwock
I can't make out a word
My whiskers are all quivery
And time is running out
I'll never get through rounds today
I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!

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